

EDITORIAL

I am getting near the end of my tenure as editor, just as aspirant contributors are getting to know me and can address me by name. I still get poems coming in for John Ennis, or Micheal O'Siadhail, or Dennis O'Driscoll, or other past editors — all of it a salutary reminder that I am only transient here, and that *Poetry Ireland Review* outlives any one editorship.

Presumably the editor of *PIR* 47 or whatever will be getting manuscripts with accompanying notes to Peter Denman, or Peter Denim, or Peter Desmond, or Peter Drennan. In all of which I at any rate, would recognise myself. If I may be permitted a little egocentricity, Why do so many people get the simple but distinctive two-syllable six-letter name wrong? It's not that I feel that I'm particularly notable, as in individual, or that an editor's name should be writ in stone, but I'm talking about writers of poetry here, and their medium is words; I'd have thought "Den" and "man" would pose no great challenge to anyone past the first stage of the Ladybird reading scheme — never mind poets.

In spite of the changes of editorship, *Poetry Ireland Review* has developed an identity over the years. The emergence of this identity over its first twenty issues or so is traced in this issue by Richard Hayes, who has compiled an index of *PIR* which is to be published shortly. There is also a piece by Paula Meehan on "The Poet as Poet-in-Residence" about her stint in Trinity earlier this year. She is now Writer-in-Residence in UCD. Carol Rumens, Writer-in-Residence at Queens, is interviewed. And another contributor to this issue, is Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, who offers a comprehensive reply to a recent article by Anne Stevenson in *PN Review*, is Poet-in-Residence at UCC. We have bracketed just about all this year's university poets in residence in this issue. I am pleased to have poems from each of them.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poem, in common with the others in Irish here, is published without a translation. While I welcome linguistic crossover in Irish poetry in both languages, it had recently got to the stage that in submitting to certain

journals — this one, for instance — poets in Irish felt that they had to supply an english version of any work submitted. While this is helpful to many readers, I am not sure that it is healthy for poetry. Poetry should have confidence in its own language. Anyone who was at the reading which Joseph Brodsky gave in Dublin during the summer will remember the moment when he switched from his poems in english to declaim a poem in Russian; I doubt if the language was understood by more than a few in the attendance — certainly not by me — yet everyone sensed the power. Even if we could not understand it, we could stand by it. (Incidentally, there will be an interview with Joseph Brodsky in the next issue).

And yet, grace of language and clarity of meaning are important to poetry: never mind the theme, how's the language? If I find a poem that has the drive and timing of a well-told joke, or the linguistic ingenuity of a good cryptic crossword clue, I'll settle for that; anything that can hold the attention for the duration of its own reading.

In his survey, Richard Hayes remarks that *PIR* has an "almost total lack of contemporary political reference" which indicates "the degree to which creativity is captured by and expressive of the political/market system that produces it. Poetry speaks a language that is apart from the larger general discourse of society. For the poems that get published take their material from the private intimate world of fantasies, confessions, declarations. In this they are representative of the larger bulk of material that is submitted to *Poetry Ireland Review*, as successive editors have noticed. Poems from men about their fathers and about women, poems from women about having children and about men, poems from either about dying and about sunsets and about shorelines. Very little on public matters. But I would argue that the act of publishing, the finding a space and language for such private intimacies is, itself a political act in contemporary society.